

MULTI-NATIONAL DIVISION – BAGHDAD

Media Release

HQ-MND Baghdad

Camp Liberty

Baghdad, Iraq

APO AE 09344

Commercial: (914) 822-8174

IRAQNA 011-964-790-192-4675

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RELEASE No. 20060701-01

July 1, 2006

Soldier-medics make lessons learned video, help fellow medics

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363rd MPAD

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – In an effort to better prepare newly trained combat medics, Sgt. Maj. Aaron Arch, 4th Infantry Division's Surgeon's Office, teamed up with medics of 5th Engineer Battalion June 17 to create a video spotlighting valuable lessons learned by the medics of the battalion.

The video will provide medics back in the U.S. a look at what they should expect if deployed to Iraq as a combat medic, said Arch.

Using lessons learned since arriving in theater, Arch said he wants to pass knowledge on to other medics "as soon as we find out."

The video begins with a review of Tactical Combat Casualty Care and then delves into the details of being a medic in Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Abroadger Lipardo, the senior medical noncommissioned officer-in-charge for 5th Eng. Bn., and the narrator of the video, lists equipment the battalion's medics

carry during missions and talks about decision-making factors in casualty evacuation scenarios. He also conducts several “instructional demonstrations,” aided by medics from the battalion.

The purpose of the video is two-fold. It provides combat medics “a snapshot of the daily medical duties the 5th Eng. Bn. medics perform in support of the battalion’s route-clearance mission,” and to “demonstrate casualty evacuation using the RG-31, a mine-proof clearing vehicle used by the battalion,” said Lipardo, of San Diego, Calif.

The medics of the battalion hit a learning curve when they arrived in Iraq at the end of last year, said Lipardo. With the battlefield proving to be increasingly mechanized, the first few months were challenging for the medics as they learned how to conduct their operations with nonstandard vehicles, such as the buffalo, the M1114 up-armored humvee and the RG-31.

“These are proven medics here,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Kevin Curtis, 5th Eng. Bn., a native of Petersburg, Va. “The (battalion) has clocked almost 40,000 kilometers, and these medics have saved Iraqi army lives, Iraqi national’s lives and Soldier’s lives.”

One of the main challenges the medics faced was extricating and evacuating casualties in the cramped RG-31, the armored vehicle 5th Eng. Bn. Soldiers use most often on patrols “outside the wire.” The vehicle’s narrow interior limits movement in an emergency situation, explained Spc. Aaron Handy, a medic for Company C, 5th Eng. Bn., who is a native of Adrian, Mich.

Handy, who graduated from advanced individual training at the U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, in May 2005, said he and his

fellow medics have learned to “carry only the essentials so that there will be enough room to work if there is a casualty.”

“We are not going to allow someone to die because we don’t know how to extricate them,” said Arch. The purpose of the video is to “increase awareness and familiarization for combat lifesavers, medics and other first responders,” he added.

For the video, a few of the battalion’s medics demonstrated how to extricate a casualty from the gunner’s turret of the RG-31 as well as loading a casualty on a spine board into the vehicle. Both demonstrations displayed the challenges the medics must overcome dealing with the RG-31’s tight space.

“The RG-31 sits high off the ground,” explained Lipardo. “We discovered Soldiers needed practice loading and unloading from this height.”

Medics also discovered that using a spine board solved problems associated with loading a casualty into the back of the cramped vehicle.

“AIT medics are used to handling litters,” said Lipardo. “They train with litters constantly. But when we got here, we learned the spine board is easier to use with our vehicles than the litter. It has a smooth surface and takes up a lot less space.”

Using spine boards instead of litters is only a small portion of the feedback Lipardo and his team hopes to offer fellow medics with their video.

“We are constantly pushing lessons learned to other Soldier-medics,” said Sgt. Suzanna Liebman, a medic for Company A, 5th Eng. Bn., and a native of Juneau, Alaska. “This video will help AIT Soldiers to be more confident in their role as combat medics if they are deployed to Iraq.”

The video is not just for the students, Liebman said, adding that she believes the video will be helpful for instructors at the school, who were deployed to Iraq, to illustrate their own experiences and “supplement their teaching.”

For now, the video heads to the Combat Medic Training Center on Camp Victory, where it will be made into a final product.

Once the video is complete, Arch said he plans to pass it on to Forces Command, the 10th Mountain Division Surgeon’s Office currently in Afghanistan, and to the U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School, among other places. Arch said he will leave it up to the recipients to determine how the video is used – whether it is used for “training, as a part of curriculum or however they chose.”

Arch said he hopes that regardless of how the video is used that it will “better prepare medics for whatever they may encounter.”



Securing a casualty.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Staff Sgt. Abroadger Lipardo, senior medical noncommissioned officer-in-charge for 5th Engineer Battalion, demonstrates how to properly secure a casualty inside an RG-31 mine-proof clearing vehicle with the use of a spine board June 17. Lipardo, a native of San Diego, demonstrated several casualty evacuation techniques during the making of a medic training video. The video is intended to pass valuable lessons learned in Iraq to medics back in the U.S.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karl Johnson, 363rd MPAD)



Describing medic bag.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Staff Sgt. Abroadger Lipardo, senior medical noncommissioned officer-in-charge for 5th Engineer Battalion, describes the equipment a medic uses in Iraq during the making of a training video here June 17. Lipardo, a San Diego native, hopes the video will give medics back in the U.S. a better idea of what to expect if they are deployed to Iraq.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karl Johnson, 363rd MPAD)



Loading the casualty.

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq – Medics from 5th Engineer Battalion demonstrate the proper way to load a casualty during the making of a medic training video here June 17. The video will be used to pass lessons learned in Iraq to medics back in the U.S.

(U.S. Army photo by Spc. Karl Johnson, 363rd MPAD)